Kootenai County
Local Emergency Planning Committee
Wildland Urban Interface

Wildfire Mitigation Project

Standard
Operating
Procedure

Guide

Grant/Contract Administration
Program Management
FireSmart Project Operations

Contents

FireSmart Hazardous Fuels Treatment

Contacts
- *Telephone/Fax*
- *Email/Internet*
- *Community Meeting*

Inventory
- *Equipment*
- *Signs/FireSmart Materials*

Site Visits
- *Scheduling*
- *Prioritizing*
- *Marking*
- *Pricing*
- *Special Circumstances*

Contracts
- *Options*
- *Forms*
- *Processing*
- *Files*

Contractors
- *List of Vendors and contacts (could be appendix)*
- *Performance Measures (could be appendix)*
- *Activities*
- *Rotation Policy*
  - *Contact procedure*
  - *Determining assignments*
  - *Maintaining Log*
  - *Decline job/price*
  - *Grievance procedure*
- *Inspections*
- *Invoices*
- *Number of jobs/time limits*
- *Complaints from Property Owners*
- *Complaints from Vendors*

Record Keeping

- *Forms/Spreadsheets*
  - *Calculating acres treated/protected*
- *Use of Maps*
- *Photographs*
- *Reports*
  - *To whom & when*
  - *Storage/security*
  - *Updates*

Meetings

Grants

The initial grant writing for this project was performed on a freelance basis by individuals from the respective granting agencies.

- Available grants are detailed to the WUI Task Force who makes recommendations to the LEPC.
- The LEPC gives approval, and authorizes the Task Force to pursue the funds.
- The grant application is completed, submitted to legal services for review then submitted to the appropriate funding agency for processing.

Contacts for WUI Fire Mitigation Plan Project grants:

Bureau of Land Management	Brad Wagner Jeff Casey
Idaho Department of Lands	Mike Denney Dan Brown
Bureau of Disaster Services	Richard Wolfe Fred Heywood
Kootenai County OEM	Sandy Von Behren
Idaho Department of Commerce	John Austin, PAC Colleen Allison, KC

Applicable Laws and Regulations

OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments & Non-profit Organizations

OMB Circular A-102, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Non-profits

OMB Circular A-87, Cost Principles for State and Local Governments

OMB Circular A-112, Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations

43 CFR Part 12, Administrative and Audit Requirements and Cost Principles

31 USC 1352, Certification Regarding Lobbying

43 CFR Part 12, Appendix A, Debarment
Appendix C, Drug Free Workplace
Appendix D, Alternate I

Public Law 106-113, Buy American Act

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

Executive Order 11246

49 CFR Part 24, Uniform Relocation Assistance Act

Copeland Anti Kickback Act

Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968

Age Discrimination Act of 1975

Rehabilitation Act of 1973

44 CFR Emergency Management and Assistance Regulations

Historic Preservation Act

Procurement

Professional Services

The WUI Fire Mitigation Program is funded with a combination of local, state and federal dollars. To ensure compliance with all grant regulations the most stringent requirements of each have been utilized for procurement.

Professional Services are obtained through competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) and Request for Quotes (RFQ) processes.

Panhandle Area Council (PAC) oversees the procurement process, while providing administrative and technical support.

RFP Development

Using a standard boilerplate, the RFP will be reviewed and revised by WUI Task Force members. Multiple drafts may be necessary to produce a final document which covers the full scope of work, required tasks and deliverables. Rating criteria and percentages must be included.

- The RFP will be advertised twice over a period of 30 days in a newspaper with local distribution.

- The publication notice maybe abbreviated, however each prospective bidder must receive the full RFP and any subsequent additions or amendments.

- A complete record of everyone requesting and receiving an RFP should be maintained. Amendments should be sent to all requestors.

- Date and time for submission maybe changed with 10 days prior written and published notice. Late submissions will not be considered for review.

- Submissions will be date stamped and stored with seal intact until time of bid opening.

A pre-bid conference may be conducted during the publication period. Time and date should be stated in the RFP and published with the notice. Minutes of the conference must be taken and distributed to all RFP holders regardless of whether they attend the Pre-Bid.

RFP Review

- Only the criteria listed in the RFP may be used for evaluation.
- A review board (generally 3 – 5 people) should be selected prior to the bid opening.
- The review board may evaluate the RFPs as a group, immediately following the bid opening; or each reviewer may receive a copy of each RFP for evaluation prior to a meeting of the full review board.
- Standard Evaluation Rating Sheets will be used. Rating criteria and percentages must match the RFP. A Summary Evaluation Sheet will be prepared at completion, and a recommendation forwarded to the LEPC for action.
- If the RFP also includes an interview stage, the recommendation is forwarded to a previously designated selection committee.
- During interviews, each bidder must be asked the same questions in the same order. A written record of each interview should be maintained.
- Once all require data has been collected, the Selection Committee prepares a recommendation for the LEPC. The LEPC votes to approve the contract award.
- An official offer letter is sent to the successful bidder, rejection letters to all others will be sent at the same time.

Request for Quotes (RFQ) to Establish Rotating Vendor List

Development of the RFQ is the same as an RFP. The WUI Task Force provides experience and personnel to compile and evaluate information until a comprehensive, complete document is produced. The RFQ for Vendors details activities and requirements for Hazardous Fuels Treatment in Kootenai County.

Each potential Vendor submitted a list of activities with a corresponding per man-hour cost. Bidders were encouraged to add activities to the published list.

All submitted costs were entered into a spreadsheet and averaged. The averages were compared with standard rates in the project area, and a set list of activities and pay rates was produced.

Other Procurement - Equipment, Supplies

- Any request to purchase equipment, supplies, services, etc. utilizing grant funds must be submitted and approved, prior to costs being incurred.

- Requests for purchases by the Project Manager will be submitted to the Steering Committee for approval. All other requests should be submitted to the LEPC.

- Requests for expenditures must be in writing, and should include a minimum of three cost quotes. Quotes should include all associated costs, such as postage, insurance, maintenance, auxiliary equipment, etc.

Non-expendable items will be assigned an inventory number and appropriately marked. The inventory will be reviewed and updated annually. Equipment purchased with project funds is the property of the Kootenai County LEPC. Individuals using said equipment are expected to use reasonable care in the operation, transport, and storage of the property. Damage, loss or theft of LEPC property should be reported immediately.

Contracts

PAC oversees contract development, provides technical support, ensures compliance with all grant requirements pertaining to contracts, and submits contracts and amendments to funding agencies as required.

- A Standard boilerplate is again the starting point for contracts. PAC ensures that all requirements of each funding agency are included.

- All contracts are submitted to Kootenai County legal services prior to execution.

- For Professional Services contracts the RFP and proposal are made part of the contract to ensure the full scope of work is covered. Two originals of each contract are produced. The Contractor keeps one fully executed original, PAC keeps the other. Copies are provided to the LEPC, and any applicable fund agency.

- For grant award contracts, two originals are produced. The funding agency keeps one fully executed copy; PAC maintains the other in the project files. Copies are provided to the LEPC and others as needed.

Amendments

- PAC prepares amendments when requested.

- Once a draft has been approved by the appropriate parties, the amendment is submitted to Kootenai County legal department for review.

- Executed amendments are filed with the original contracts; copies are distributed to contract copyholders.

Insurance

PAC is the certificate holder for all contractor insurance. Original policies are received at PAC, logged into the contractors file and reviewed periodically to ensure dates are current. Contractors may not work on the project without the required insurance in place.

Reports

Each funding agency has reporting requirements. For the WUI Fire Mitigation Project they are as follows:

Bureau of Disaster Services – Final Report (granting period was very short)
Bureau of Land Management – Task Order #1 required only an annual report. The report consists of SF 269, SF 272 and a narrative. Task Order #2 adds quarterly reports. Christine Catherman, BLM Boise office has requested a copy of the Expense Summary be submitted with Requests for Funds, SF 270.
Idaho Department Lands – Quarterly Reports consisting of SF 269, SF 272, narrative and expenditure summary, and annual summary.
Department of Commerce – Status Reports to be submitted with requests for funds. Final report, which will include all contracts, final Mitigation Plan, in-kind documentation, newspaper articles and photos. Requirements are detailed in the contract agreement.

- When requested additional or interim reports are prepared and submitted.

- Each funding agency should receive a copy of the annual audit (Kootenai County) during the duration of the project.

- PAC also reports any changes in scope, major compliance performance problems, management problems, scheduling problems, all construction commencement and completion, loan closings and defaults.

Pay Requests

PAC prepares the pay requests for the projects, checks are written by Kootenai County Auditor's office. PAC maintains a complete set of financial records for the project. All grant awards, expenditures and budget information is processed and maintained in the official files. (Files are kept for a minimum of 3 years after the completion of the project. If required by a funding agency, records may be kept longer.)

Pay request process

Invoices from FireSmart Vendors are submitted to the Project Manager. Those invoices, and invoices from all other sources are submitted to PAC for processing.

- All transmittals to PAC (mail, fax, courier, hand delivery) are date stamped and entered into the daily mail log.
- Project invoices are processed at least once a week. When possible, Vendor invoices are processed within 48 hours of receipt.
- Invoices are reviewed, checked for correctness or possible duplication, and then verified as an authorized expense. For FireSmart invoices, the Homeowner's contract, Project Order and the invoice are compared for consistency. The invoice information is then entered onto a control sheet. The control sheet designates which grants funds will be used to pay each invoice.
- A county voucher is typed for each Vendor, with the assigned project code, and the activity code. These vouchers are later reviewed by the LEPC treasurer, and initialed prior to submission to the auditor.
- If the invoice is a first time submission to Kootenai County for the vendor, PAC ensures that a completed W-9 form is included with the invoice.
- The expense summary is updated to show the new expenditures.
- A cover letter and transmittal sheet are prepared.
- Envelopes are prepared for each vendor, and attached to the voucher.
- Two copies are made of the entire pay request. The Auditor's office receives original invoices, W-9s and correspondence. PAC maintains the originals of all contract documents. The LEPC receives strictly copies.
- The pay request is submitted to the LEPC Treasurer, Sandy Von Behren, for review and approval, after which the packet is forwarded to the auditor's office.

- The auditor's office processes checks on Fridays. Generally, the checks will be written the week following submission of the request. The auditor mails the checks directly to the vendors in the envelopes provided with the packet.

- The auditor enters the date and amount of each payment on the bottom of the control sheet, and returns it to PAC for the official file.

Payment Problems

Slow/delayed Payment

Because dates are logged from initial submission of invoices through payment, PAC can monitor for delays or slow payment problems. All project contracts state 30 days is minimum time period for grant project payments. Vendors may contact PAC at anytime to inquire about the status of an invoice or payment. If necessary PAC can make inquiries of the auditor's office or funding agencies to determine scheduled payment dates.

Requests for Funds submitted immediately prior to holidays, or during fiscal year end closing may be subject to additional delay depending on the schedules, workload and policies of the funding agencies.

Payments are mailed to the address stated on the invoice. PAC should be notified of all changes of mailing addresses. Lost or misdirected checks will be reissued through the auditors office in accordance with county protocols.

Requests for rush payments may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Special requests require the participation of a county commissioner, and should be reserved for emergency situations only.

Requests for Funds

Requests for funds vary by funding agency. The Idaho Department of Lands agreed to use the same set of forms the project is using for requesting BLM funds. Those forms are an SF 270 Request for Advance or Reimbursement, and SF 272 and SF 269 for quarterly and annual reporting. The Department of Commerce has an in house form which is available in the Grant Administrators Handbook.

Funds for this project are managed on a cash basis, and all requests are for reimbursement. Requests are made once funds are obligated. An obligation can be an invoice, or a signed contract. Therefore, the summary report of signed contracts provided by the Project Manager can be used to determine the amount to be requested from the IDL for HFT.

Once the obligations have been determined, the amount required from each funding agency is calculated. The IDL funds do not require match, and match for the BLM funds is minimal. When match is required, PAC calculates the percentage or raw amount and records number in the prescribed manner.

The match for the Dept of Commerce grant is in-kind, and reported as such. (not cash) The equivalent of compensation for meeting attendance during the development of the Fire Mitigation Plan was used to provide the required match. Attendees employed by the project may not be used when calculating in-kind. The Community and Task Force meetings provided ample quantities for the grant. Attendance at other meetings, mileage and facility rental could have been used to meet the in-kind obligation, had it been necessary.

The SF 270 is prepared for the appropriate agency. These forms require the signature of the LEPC Chair. Three originals are prepared. Two are submitted with a cover letter to the funding agency, one original is filed in the reports file. A copy is provided to the LEPC. The originals are mailed with a cover letter to the proper agency for processing. This can take up to 30 days, but usually takes less than 3 weeks. The funding agencies send the money directly to Kootenai County. BLM deposits the funds via electronic transfer; Department of Lands sends a paper check. The auditor's office maintains those funds in an account designated for the project, and writes the checks accordingly.

Files

PAC maintains a complete set of historical files for the project in the following categories:

Applications	Procurement
Contracts	Environmental
Correspondence	Memos/email
General	Inventory
Organizations	Reports
Photos/Media	Newspaper
Research	Citizen Participation
Task Force	Steering Committee
Internet	HFT/Project Orders
Document Development	General
Audit	Closeout

Additional files are added when needed. Project files are kept for a minimum of 3 years, longer if required by a funding agency.

Documents/Forms

The WUI Fire Mitigation Project uses a combination of standard forms and locally developed documents. A copy of each draft made during development of a document is kept in the files to provide guidelines for future designs. Forms specifically required by a funding agency are always used, but may be supplemented with a locally developed form if beneficial to the project. Forms used for pay requests, such as the control sheet, were developed by PAC, and are used for all projects. Templates and electronic versions of forms are available from PAC.

Meetings

PAC attends all meetings, as the representative of the LEPC (project owner). The primary purpose of attendance at all meetings by a PAC representative is to ensure compliance with contract requirements and grant agency rules and regulations. The PAC representative also provides continuity of communication and policy issues.

All meetings must be documented; attendance records and minutes are maintained in the historical files. When requested, PAC provides technical assistance and guidance with research, information requests and problem solving.

Meetings regularly attended by PAC for this project: LEPC monthly meeting, Community Planning Committee meetings, Task Force monthly meetings, Community Disaster Education sub-committee and Steering Committee. Additional meetings may be attended on request: Board of County Commissioners public hearings, community group, agency and organization meetings.

Release of Information

As a publicly funded grant project, most program information is available to the public on request. Grant awards, budget and expenditures (to include contract amounts) are all within the public domain. The agencies involved and companies contracted are part of the public record, however, private information about individuals, such as address or telephone number is not released without written permission of the individual.

Technical Assistance

The WUI Fire Mitigation Project is unique. PAC has provided research and assistance with several activities not usually included in standard grant administration contracts. The additional activities are part of the collaborative effort of all the participating agencies and organizations who are working together to create a comprehensive and effective program for wildfire hazard mitigation in Kootenai County.

FireSmart Hazardous Fuels Treatment

Contacts

- Phone calls: When calls come in, the callers have the program explained to them. They are either sent the "Request to Participate" packet of information or an appointment is scheduled per the call and their level of interest. Often these calls are time consuming, because the callers cannot fathom something this good, which is free, and / or they have received wrong information –such as we replace cedar shake roofs.
- Neighbor referrals: These are better, because they are almost automatic agreements, which only require marking, development of the Survivable Space Plan with them, inspection, and signatures.

Faxes and emails: both are sent Request to Participate information.

How (number, address) does the public make contact?

What steps are taken after an inquiry is made? Timeline of sending out info, receiving reply, scheduling site visit, getting work started….

What forms/materials are used? (examples in addendices)

Describe neighborhood meeting process. Set-up, conducting the meeting.

Inventory

Two types of inventory items.
1. Non-capital equipment, such as the GPS, digital camera and magnetic door signs
2. Expendable items purchased by the LEPC for program use, such as Homeowner contracts or other forms with the FireSmart Logo and site signs.

Describe how are items marked.

What is process for reporting damaged or lost equipment?

Where are signs kept? Extra contracts/FireSmart material?

Site visits

These are done by geographic areas as much as possible. The most efficient are after-hours neighborhood meetings. After inspection, each is determined to either be not-qualified or qualified.

How/when are visits scheduled?

Not qualified are such homes as lake front places with only deciduous trees, golf course lots seeking beautification, development homes seeking single danger tree removal, homes not adjacent to a forest, property without living quarters, etc. These decisions are entered into the data base.

Qualified homes get a through examination which result in both recommendations to the homeowner, plus a work plan for fuel modification.

What process is used to prioritize job sites? Activities?

Outline process for treating entire neighborhoods. What if one or two properties in a neighborhood will/can not be treated?

. All marking and layout is done, with the owner generally present; if they are not able to be there, then another visit is scheduled.

How are sites marked?

Perimeter in pink, sizes and types of cut and leave trees, bushes that are cut or left, stump height, etc….

Procedure for sites with special circumstances, favorite tree, odd shaped lot, dangerous trees or power lines….

What is the process for determining price? How, if at all has the process evolved since the first jobs were priced?

What if there are disagreements? Homeowner? Contractor?

Contracts

Survivable Space Plan (homeowner contract)

Property owner options

- Once a home is determined to be qualified and a survivable space plan has been developed, there are three options for doing the work, which are outlined below:
  1. A FireSmart contractor does the work. While not perfect, they generally do excellent work.
  2. The homeowner does the work-this is an option elected by less than 3% of the applicants. While this has worked successfully for those few cases, it is generally too much work for even the most energetic home owner.
  3. The homeowner hires a contractor. Once the work is satisfactorily completed, the homeowner receives a check. The amount paid to the contractor is between them and not necessarily part of the PM's responsibilities.

In all three cases, the PM sets a lump sum fare-market value for the work. The determination of this amount is of the utmost importance to all concerned, and thus, the PM should have extensive experience in both the actual physical work, plus contractor negotiations.

Project Orders (part of vendors contract)

Maintenance of Forms

What if a contract or PO is lost or damaged?

How does the PM avoid duplications? (PO numbers are not pre-printed)

Completion and filing (up to point of submission to PAC, unless there are additional steps the PM performs)

Contractors

List of Vendors and contact information

Performance measures –including problems and solutions

Activities – what the contractor will/can do and what is not allowed/possible

Rotation Policy (Step by step) *Probably the most important information in the SOP*

How are the contractors contacted?

How frequently are the contractors contacted?

How are assignments determined?

How is the contact and assignment information documented?

How many jobs can a contractor have open at a given time?

Are there time limits for completion of jobs? What about homeowners?

What if a contractor turns down a job because of timing?

What happens if a contractor won't agree to the PM's price?

What if the homeowner has a complaint about the contractor?

What if the contractor has a complaint about the property owner?

What if the contractor has a complaint about the PM?

What if the PM has a complaint about the contractor?

Inspections

When are inspections performed?
How are inspections scheduled?
Who does the inspecting? Is everyone present?
What if the contractor/homeowner does not agree with the PM's inspection findings?
How are re-inspections conducted?

Invoices
What is the process for contractors or homeowners to submit invoices to the PM?
What is the process for the PM to submit invoices to PAC?
Requirement of W-9s for Homeowners. Explaining the tax implications.

Record Keeping

. Because of this complexity, it is mandatory that all data-both for future and historical use-be entered into a data base. Items such as names of homeowners and contractors, phone numbers, addresses, GIS locations, status of projects, etc. are recorded. Using Excel allows the information to be sorted multiple ways, according to the needs of the PM and other people involved in the program.

This task also includes the preparation of reports both for internal and external use, press releases, information for newsletters and newspaper articles, and the photo examples of projects for tours and the general public information.

What forms and spreadsheets are used? How are they stored?
How does the PM calculate the acres treated and protected numbers?

What maps are used and how?

When are photographs taken?
How are they used?

Reports

What reports is the PM required to make? Frequency? Target?

Where and how does the PM store data? How are sensitive items such as social security numbers (on completed W-9 forms for example) kept secure?

Meetings

While there are many, many opportunities for worthwhile meetings, the PM must work with the Steering Committee to prioritize which ones to attend, because attending them all could use 20 to 40% of his time. Inattention to homeowners or contractors could easily create a bad impression and reputation for the overall program. While not cast in concrete, following is an effort to prioritize them: (the hours are not just the time spent in the meeting, but includes driving to and from the meetings, plus preparation – which is a more realistic estimate of the time the meeting keeps the PM out of the field doing other work).

1. Steering Committee-necessary for direction to be given to PM: 4 hrs/month
2. Neighborhood meetings-leverages the PM's time:8hrs/month
3. Fire Chiefs Breakfasts-gets the word out and enlists them to leverage the PM's time:2.5 hrs/month
4. Fire Co-op-same as #3:2.5 hrs/month
5. WUI Task Force:2.5 hrs/month
6. LEPC General Meeting:2.5 hrs/month
7. Tours-there are lots of agency people interested in this program:8hrs/month
8. Chamber of Commerce breakfasts-gets the word out:2hrs/month

Which are required meetings?
Which are optional meetings?